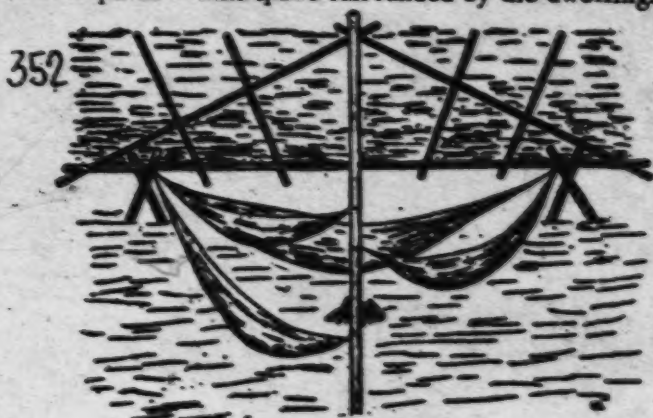


/459/

352 Hammocks are hung triangularly from the posts which sup-
[364] port the roof, and a fire is lighted in the center. If it is neces-
sary, one hammock may be hung above another, in such a way
that this triangle of two meters may shelter six persons (Fig. 5).

• 351 These dwellings are located so as to form a circle, with
[361] their high and open fronts oriented toward the center of the
patio. This space surrounded by the dwellings may or may not



/Fig. 5/

351 be completely cleared, but at least all of the small brush is
removed from the front and immediate sides. Sometimes they
also clear the ground of weeds for space of one meter behind
the houses.

356 The dirt floor is cleaned by sweeping or scraping it at least
once a day (although between one cleaning and another there
might well accumulate on it many platano skins and other ob-
jects). The rubbish is piled up, using the hands or a piece of
firewood; then it is carried and thrown outside of the central patio.
Great piles of rubbish and waste accumulate at the edge of these
cleared areas. Sometimes they use a flat basket for carrying
the rubbish, and very frequently it is carried with nothing but the
hands, since they do not always have a basket available, or it
might be in use for other jobs.

161 and as many as 250, but the lower extreme is uncommon because
162 of military vulnerability and the upper extreme occurs only
*621 when particularly intense warfare retards village splitting
or leads to the coalition of several related villages.

361 Villages that are on peaceful terms may be found
*628 living within a few miles of each other, whereas mutually
722 hostile villages rarely are located less than a day's march
apart; even then, one of the villages may move to reduce the
possibility of raiding.

361 The village itself is circular or oval in plan, is
generally surrounded by a palisade of upright logs and,
depending on the number of people living in the village, has
a diameter ranging from 15 to 70 yards.

361 The village is hardly more than a continuous, circular
342 lean-to roof, open at the center. The roof starts at ground
level (occasionally one or two feet above ground level),
rises at an angle of 30° to 40°, reaching a maximum height of
about 25 feet. The un-partitioned segments of the continuous
roof are built by the families who occupy them, brothers and
their dependents living next to each other. The materials
used in construction are long, slender poles, vines to secure
the pole frame and a thatch made from leaves.

• 351 There are usually several entrances to the village,
each located at a point marking the boundary of one segment
of the roof with another, and are merely un-thatched sections
of the otherwise continuous roof. Most of the entrances are
only 3 feet high, although there usually is at least one

- 351 large entrance, that leading to the river or stream. All entrances are covered with dry leaves and brush in the evening and the slightest movement of the covering creates sufficient noise to alert the dogs.

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[37] The Yanomamö occupy a relatively homogeneous geographical region of low-lying tropical jungle interrupted by densely-wooded hills that sometimes reach an altitude of 2,500 feet, some 2,000 feet above the elevation of the general

361
[33]
[484] terrain. Larger hills are more common in the headwaters of the Orinoco and along the boundaries separating Brazil from Venezuela, but the Indians prefer to make their villages in the lowlands on small streams, as all of their travelling is

[779] done on foot. Only recently have the Yanomamö begun moving to the larger rivers, where they may obtain canoes and steel tools from foreigners. In 1950 there was only one Yanomamö village, Mahekodo-tedi, on a navigable portion of the Orinoco River; since then at least seven or eight villages have moved to the Orinoco or one of its larger tributaries in order to gain access to trade goods (axes and machetes) foreign to their culture. The overwhelming number of Yanomamö villages,

[221]
[184] however, can only be reached by walking to them. During the wet season (April-September) travel all but ceases between villages because the trails linking villages are inundated.

241 The Yanomamö are slash-and-burn horticulturists, subsisting mainly on plantains and bananas, of which they cultivate four or five varieties each. Following these crops in economic importance are several root crops, including taro,

622 Several days went by and I still did not have the item, so I
602 asked Kqobawā what he had done about it. He said he had
613 spoken to Shiimima, but the matter then rested with him: "He
561 will give it to you if it is his desire to do so." I ulti-
123 mately had to resort to my own means to recover the flash-
554 light, as Kqobawā could not force Shiimima to return it.
591 When I questioned Kqobawā about this ineffectiveness, he
explained: "Shiimima is already fierce and I can not order
him around." Thus, while he could command his youngest
siblings to do things, he had to rely on example and suggestion
to get older agnates to do the same things. Before every
622 feast, for example, the village clearing is cleaned by scrap-
613 ing up the weeds and debris that accumulate, and hauling them
602 out of the village. As the younger agnates are busy prepar-
529 ing the food for the feast, they can not clean the clearing.
594 Kqobawā usually goes to the center of the village and begins
351 cleaning up the debris himself. After a while, his older
654 agnates join him, and perhaps their spouses as well. They
591 would be inclined, however, to refuse to do the work if
561 Kqobawā requested them to do it, for acquiescence in this
regard implies that one is being bossed around.

* 621 Within a local descent group, therefore, the relative
613 age of the agnates is crucial to the solidarity of the group
602 and the effectiveness of its leadership. If the father of
561 a group of brothers is alive, he will be the leader, and the
593 group functions quite smoothly. When he dies, however, the
602 solidarity and strength of the group diminishes, as adult
613



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Fig. 2-3. Men blowing ebene, a hallucinogenic drug, into each other's nostrils by means of a hollow tube.

SHELTER All house materials likewise come from the jungle: poles, vines, and leaves. The Yanomamö permanent house—*shabono*—is probably the most sophisticated manufacture produced by these people. Its construction requires considerable cooperation, planning, labor, and patience. Unfortunately, the *shabono* only lasts one or two years because the leaves begin to leak, or the entire village is burned to the ground in order to destroy the cockroaches, scorpions, spiders, and other vermin that infest the house. These can become such a nuisance that the roof is literally alive with bugs. Kapbaw's house was so badly infested at one point that the noise of thousands of scurrying roaches produced a constant, noticeable din in the village. Whenever someone got out of his hammock, the roof just above his head would suddenly come alive with roaches, disturbed by the movement below. As they scurried to safety, many of them would fall off, producing a shower of bugs on the occupants below. There were so many bugs that the increased activity above the moving person also increased the din, as if a sudden gust of wind had disturbed the dried leaves.

Each individual builds his own section of the *shabono*. The man usually does all the heavy work of locating and fetching poles for the frame, placing them into the ground or tying them overhead, and weaving the numerous leaves into the roof thatch. The wife helps by gathering the leaves and vines used in the construction.

The first step in building a new *shabono* is the selection of the site. This is usually some well-drained portion of the garden, such as a slight rise or hump.

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[36]

[462]

[351] •

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4 feet off the ground at the rear and 6 feet off the ground at the front. Shorter sticks are then laid crossways on the major roof poles and these, in turn, covered with several layers of long, broad, wild "banana" leaves (see Glossary, under "Banana, wild"). It is quite small, but can sleep three individuals. Frequently, the traveler finds the remains of one of these houses and has merely to put a new layer of leaves on the roof to make it waterproof; occasionally, he takes a chance that it won't rain that night and does not improve the hut at all. 342 484

When the Yanomamö settle a new area, they erect temporary villages of these crude huts and live in them until they can build a *shabono*. They also live in huts like these while they are re-roofing the old *shabono*. 342

The permanent village is complete when the palisade of logs is erected around its circumference. This is placed some 3 or 4 feet behind the roof, allowing space for a path around the village inside the palisade. The palisade itself is about 10 feet high and usually made of a mixture of palm and hardwood logs. It is kept in repair only when there is some reason to suspect raiders. Otherwise, people pilfer logs from it for use as firewood. The entrance to the village, as well as the palisade entrance, is covered with brush and logs at night to keep out intruders. Anyone trying to enter will inevitably make the brush move and alarm the village dogs. 351 • [313] [231]

FOOD AND ITS GATHERING The jungle provides numerous varieties of food, both animal and vegetable. The most commonly taken game includes several species of monkeys, two varieties of wild "turkey," two species of wild pig, armadillos, anteaters, tapir, deer, a small alligator, small rodents, and several species of smaller birds. Wild vegetable foods commonly exploited by the Yanomamö are: palm fruits of several species, hardwood fruits, brazil nuts, tubers, and the seed pods of the feral banana. Of these, the palm fruits are by far the most significant. 224 262 222 262

These occur seasonally and, for brief periods of time, produce large quantities of fruits. Unfortunately, there is very little edible substance in each fruit, so that in order to get filled, one must eat the edible portion of enormous quantities of fruit. The Yanomamö extensively exploit two closely related palms, *yui* and *karubi*. The *yui* fruits are about the size of small hen's eggs and occur in large clusters, weighing 80 pounds and more, near the tops of the palm trees. The *karubi* fruits are about half that size. The exterior portion of the fruit is a leathery shell which is peeled with the teeth. Inside there is a thin layer of very bitter, white flesh. This is chewed and sucked off. The taste resembles that of a poor grade of bath soap. Of the two, I found *karubi* the more repugnant. My throat burned when I ate them. (252)

Another commonly exploited palm is the *adiwabi*. It is tangerine red in color and covered with a leather-like skin that consists of hundreds of small scales. They are about the size of large hen's eggs and resemble small hand grenades. When the fruit is dry, as, for example, when it is first cut from the tree, it is almost impossible to get the leathery scales off. The Yanomamö overcome this difficulty by throwing the fruit bunches into water and letting them soak for several days, after which the scales can be easily scraped off with the fingernails, exposing a thin layer of yellowish, soft flesh that tastes very much like cheese. The fruits begin to ferment after they have soaked, producing a slightly pungent taste. I enjoyed eating *adiwabi* with the Yanomamö; the fruit was good, and the technique of eating it was very sociable. We would wade into the swamp where the fruit had been submerged and grope around in the murky water to locate it. After (252)

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*628
574 undertake it if it meant getting rid of their first group of visitors, who, by this time, had spent nearly a week eating Kaobawā's produce.

[624]
[415]
[352] On the morning of the feast three large pieces of bark from the *atapuri* tree were cut and brought to the village. These were made into troughs to contain the boiled, ripe plantain soup. All day long Kaobawā's younger brothers, who had returned from the hunt the day before, labored at cooking the enormous quantity of ripe plantains, pouring each boiling containerful into the trough as it was prepared.³

[251]
[152] The plantains that Kaobawā had hung in his *shabono* roof a week before were now ripe. The young men who were preparing the soup would cut the bunches of plantains from the roof, split each fruit with their thumb, throw the two halves of the flesh into a cooking pot, and toss the skins onto a pile. They worked at this task from early morning until late afternoon, in addition to boiling a nearly equal quantity of green plantains, which provided the green vegetable food that customarily accompanies the presentation

[624] of meat. Yanomamö etiquette dictates that meat must be accompanied by vegetable food and vice versa.⁴ It is an insult, for example, to offer someone meat without simultaneously offering a vegetable food with it. Peeling green plantains is a little more difficult than peeling ripe ones, which are very tough and brittle. The Yanomamö solve this problem, like they solve so many others, by using their teeth. Each plantain is bitten along its length several times, cracking the peel, which in turn is removed with the fingernails and further application of the dentition. On this particular occasion, two young men peeled, with their thumbs, enough ripe plantains to make approximately 93 gallons of soup, and, with their teeth, a sufficiently large quantity of green plantains to fill a dozen large pack-baskets.

[622]
[351] In the morning on the day of the feast, Kaobawā went to the center of the village clearing where all could see him and proceeded to pull weeds. The clearing has to look presentable to the visitors, as it functions as the dancing plaza. As noted before, since Yanomamö headmen cannot directly order their followers to execute tasks such as these, they usually initiate them and hope that others will follow. By and by, a number of older men joined him, as well as a few women, and when a sufficient number of workers were pulling weeds and hauling them out, Kaobawā quietly retired to his hammock, from which he oversaw the food preparations and calculated the distribution of meat.

Excitement in the village grew conspicuously as the hours passed, and by noon there was a constant din of laughter and chatter, punctuated now and then with a shrill scream from some young man overcome with the thrill of the feast. Occasionally, the visitors would reply to the shouts, setting off a brief contest of screaming between hosts

[415]
[777] ³Kaobawā's group has access to aluminum pots now and uses them extensively in food preparations. Most Yanomamö groups still use crude clay pots, although these are being rapidly replaced by aluminum ware, which is traded inland to the more remote villages.

[262]
[114] ⁴The three vegetable foods considered to be suitable accompaniments for the meat presentation are: boiled green plantains, boiled *nasha* fruit, and cassava bread. A number of missionaries and a few scientific observers have identified the Yanomamö feast strongly with the *nasha* fruit (Zerries 1955; de Barandiaran 1966). If it is to be identified with any food, it should be called the "plantain feast," but to identify the feast with a food that sometimes (*nasha*) or invariably (plantains) accompanies it is to overlook the sociopolitical causes of the feast. *Nasha* is so unnecessary to the feast that it was served at only two of six feasts I attended. In short, the Yanomamö feast is a social and political event, not a harvest ceremony, and occurs independently of the abundance or availability of *nasha* fruit. *Nasha* fruit ripens in February, the peak of the dry season. It is only in the dry season that feasts can be held, because travel is difficult or impossible at other times of the year. The correlation of the ripening of *nasha* and feasting is rather more fortuitous than causal.